

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13  
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R 241442Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
DIA WASHDC  
SECDEF  
USCINCEUR  
USIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3268

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, SY  
SUBJECT: AL-THAWRAH EDITOR APPEALS FOR FOCUS ON DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES

REF: DAMASCUS 3207

1. SUMMARY: LOCAL COLUMNIST HAS BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION TWO EDITORIALS B AL-THAWRA EDITOR APPEALING FOR MORE ATTENTION TO SYRIA'S DOMESTIC PROBLEMS, AND HAS COMMENTED THAT IN HIS VIEW THESE EDITORIALS INDICATE LIKELIHOOD OF CABINET CHANGE AND POSSIBLY SHIFTS IN BAATH PARTY HEIRARCHY AS WELL. END SUMMARY.

2. AL-BAATH COLUMNIST HAS DRAWN OUR ATTENTION TO TWO EDITORIALS BY EDITOR OF AL-THAWRA, ALI SULAYMAN. THESE TWO  
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COLUMNS APPEARED IN MAY 14 AND 21 ISSUES OF SULAYMAN'S PAPER, AND IN EACH OF THEM SULAYMAN APPEALED FOR GREATER FOCUS ON SOLVING DOMESTIC PROBLEMS CONFRONTING SARG. IN FIRST EDITORIAL, SULAYMAN NOTED THE /NEGATIVE PHENOMENA WHICH BEGAN GROWING AND MULTIPLYING WITH SYRIA'S PREOCCUPATION WITH MAJOR ISSUES AND WITHITS PREOCCUPATION WITH SEEKING A GREATER STATUS AND MORE IMPORTANT ROLE FOR

ITSELF IN REGION. ISN'T IT TIME THIS STRAY AND GREEDY GROUP SHOULD BE CONFRONTED AND DEALT WITH? WE NEED THE POWER TO MELT DOWN OUR MANY DEFECTS AND FAULTS. WE NEED THE SEVERITY THAT WOULD DELIVER US FROM THE AILMENTS OF OBESITY AND SLACKENING. ONLY IN THIS WAY CAN WE ACHIEVE THE NECESSARY BALANCE BETWEEN SYRIA'S ACCOMPOISHMENTS IN THE EXTERNAL SPHERE AND BETWEEN WHAT EXECUTIVE BODIES ARE ACCOMPLISHING INTERNALLY."

3. FOLLOW-UP EDITORIAL WEEK LATER AGAIN EXPLORED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICIES. REFERRING TO "NEGATIVE PHENOMENA," SULAYMAN WROTE THAT HE "ONCE AGAIN FELT COMPELLED TO TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF TURNING TOWARD DOMESTIC CONDITIONS, AND BABOUT THE NEED TO DISTRIBUTE OUR INTEREST BETWEEN OUR EXTERNAL BATTLES AND THE BATTLES BEING WAGED AGAINST US COVERTLY ON A DOMESTIC SCALE, IN SPITE OF THE MOMENTUM OF EXTERNAL EVENTS ALL AROUND US." CONFRONTING DOMESTIC PROBLEMS "MUST COME SOON, NOT AS AN ESCAPE FROM OUR PAN-ARAB COMMITMENTS OR AS AN UNDER-ESTIMATION OF OUR CONCERN WITH THE BIG ISSUES," BUT AS REINFORCEMENT OF SYRIAN DEFENSE CAPABILITIES, ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND INTERNAL COHESION. HE CONCLUDED: "HOW MUCH IN NEED WE ARE OF FIRMNESS, OF JUST SEVERITY."

4. AL-BAATH SOURCE THEN TOLD US THAT IN HIS VIEW SULAYMAN WAS PREPARING WAY FOR CABINET CHANGE, AND POSSIBLY FOR SHIFTS IN BAATH PARTY AS WELL. SOURCE SPECULATED THAT PRES. AL-ASSAD MIGHT CHOOSE TO RESHUFFLE AGAIN POSITIONS ON REGIONAL COMMAND. IN SUM, HE SAW ASSAD IMPLEMENTING A

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"NON-REVOLUTIONARY REVOLUTION" TO CONSOLIDATE HIS INTERNAL POSITION.

5. COMMENT: TWO SULAYMAN EDITORIALS RATHER BOLDLY OUTLINE CASE FOR CAMPAIGN AGAINST CORRUPTION IN SYRIA, AND IMPLICITLY MUST BE CONSIDERED A CRITIQUE OF THE KHULAYFAWI CABINET, WHICH WAS SPECIFICALLY CHARGED WITH CLEANING UP CORRUPTION AND PROMOTING BUREAUCRATIC EFFICIENCY. SULAYMAN ALSO FINDS WAY OF LETTING ASSAD OFF FROM RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROBLEMS, SINCE HE WAS THE ONE "PREOCCUPIED" WITH FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IT THUS DOES SEEM POSSIBLE THAT MUCH-DISCussed CABINET CHANGE COULD OCCUR IN NEAR FUTURE, BUT WE CANNOT YET DETERMINE WHETHER ASSAD WILL CHOOSE AS PRIME MINISTER ONE OF THREE CANDIDATES WHOSE NAMES NOW RECURRING IN LOCAL SPECULATION -- FORMER PRIME MINISTER AYYUBI, PEOPLE'S COUNCIL SPEAKER HALABI OR AIR FORCE COMMANDER JAMIL -- OR WILL BRING IN A NEW FACE.

MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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22 May 2009  
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